

CLAIMS:

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1. A method of archiving and retrieving digital media items based on episodic memory of predefined distinct groups of one or more people the method comprising
 - receiving a user input identifying a group to which the user belongs;
 - receiving user archiving input: identifying a digital media item to be archived for the group, selecting zero or more group event types from a predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, selecting zero or more persons in the group, and selecting a time;
 - generating index information using the received user archiving input;
 - storing the index information in association with the identified digital media item;
 - repeating the reception of user archiving input, the generation of the index information and the storing of the index information for a plurality of digital media items;
 - receiving a user retrieval input selecting or automatically selecting: zero or more group event types from the predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, zero or more persons in the group, and a time period; and
 - using the selections and the identified group to retrieve and output digital media items that match the selection.
2. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the user retrieval input comprises a user input from a different user identifying a group to which the different user belongs and the digital media items are retrieved using the group identified for the different user in the user retrieval input.
3. A method according to claim 1 including defining the distinct groups of people, and defining group event types that are appropriate for members of the groups to distinguish episodic events memorable to the group.

4. A method according to claim 1 including receiving said digital media item to be archived, and storing said digital media item in association with the index information.
5. A method according to claim 1 including receiving a user archiving input identifying a digital media item as being associated with a memorable high point in the mind of the user.
6. A method according to claim 5 wherein the user retrieval input includes an input selecting memorable high points.
7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the index information is generated to include an identification of a media type of the digital media item.
8. A method according to claim 7 wherein the user retrieval input includes an input identifying a media type, and digital media items are retrieved and output based on the identified media type.
9. A method according to claim 1 including receiving a user archiving input identifying a plurality of digital media items and an input identifying the digital media items to be associated as perceived by the user, wherein the index information is generated to include the identified association.
10. A method according to claim 9 wherein when digital media items are retrieved and output as a result of the user retrieval input, any digital media items having the identified association in the index information are automatically identified for retrieval and output.
11. A method according to claim 10 wherein the automatically identified digital media items are automatically retrieved and output.

13. A method according to claim 1 including receiving a user request for automatic nostalgic retrieval, automatically generating an initial set of said selections, using the selections to retrieve and output digital media items, automatically modifying one of the selections, using the modified selections to retrieve and output digital media items and repeating the modifying, and retrieval and output steps.

user interface means for allowing a user to generate an archiving output:
identifying a group to which the user belongs, identifying a digital media item to be
archived for the group, selecting zero or more group event types from a predetermined
plurality of group event types for the group, selecting zero or more persons in the group,
and selecting a time;

wherein said user interface means is adapted to allow a user to generate a retrieval input: identifying a group to which the user belongs, selecting zero or more group event types from the predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, selecting zero or more persons in the group, selecting a time period and identifying if retrieval is to be automatic; and said transmission means is adapted to transmit the retrieval input to the processing device to identify digital media items using the retrieval input;

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a display for displaying the received digital media items.

15. A method of operating a terminal for use in the archiving and retrieval of digital media items based on episodic memory of predefined distinct groups of one or more people, the method comprising:

allowing a user to generate an archiving input: identifying a group to which the user belongs, identifying a digital media item to be archived for the group, selecting zero or more group event types from a predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, selecting zero or more persons in the group, and selecting a time;

transmitting the archiving input to a processing device for generating index information using the archiving input, and for storing the index information in association with the identified item;

allowing a user to generate a retrieval input: identifying a group to which the user belongs, selecting zero or more group event types from the predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, selecting zero or more persons in the group, and selecting a time period, or identifying if retrieval is to be automatic;

transmitting the retrieval input to the processing device to identify digital media items using the retrieval input;

receiving any digital media items identified by the processing device; and displaying the received digital media items.

16. A carrier medium storing processor readable and implementable code for controlling a processor to carry out the method of any one of claims 1 to 13 or 15.

17. Apparatus for archiving and retrieving digital media items based on episodic memory of predefined distinct groups of one or more people, the apparatus comprising: receiving means for receiving a user input identifying a group to which the user belongs, and user archiving input: identifying a digital media item to be archived for the group, selecting zero or more group event types from a predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, selecting zero or more persons in the group, and selecting a time period;

generating means for generating index information using the received user archiving input;

storing means for storing the index information in association with the identified digital media item;

wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive a user retrieval input selecting or to automatically select: zero or more group event types from the predetermined plurality of group event types for the group, zero or more persons in the group, and a time; and

the apparatus further includes retrieval means for using the selections and the identified group to retrieve and output digital media items that match the selections.

18. Apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive the user retrieval input from a different user identifying a group to which the different user belongs.

19. Apparatus according to claim 17 including means for defining the distinct groups of people, and for defining group event types that are appropriate for members of the groups to distinguish episodic events memorable to the group.

20. Apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive said digital media items to be archived, and item storing means for storing said digital media item in association with the index information.

21. Apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive a user archiving input identifying a digital media item as being associated with a memorable high point in the mind of the user.

22. Apparatus according to claim 21 wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive a user retrieval input selecting memorable high points.

23. Apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said generating means is adapted to include an identification of a media type of the digital media item.
24. Apparatus according to claim 23 wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive a user retrieval input identifying a media type, and said retrieval means is adapted to retrieve and output digital media items based on the identified media type.
25. Apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said receiving means is adapted to receive the user archiving input identifying a plurality of digital media items to be sequenced as perceived by the user, and said generating means is adapted to generate the index information to include the identified sequences.
26. Apparatus according to claim 25 wherein said retrieval means is adapted to retrieve all digital media items identified to be sequenced when one or more digital media items are selected for retrieval.
27. Apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said receiving means receives a request for automatic nostalgic retrieval, said generating means is adapted to generate an initial set of selections and automatically modify one or more of the selections at a time in response to the request, said retrieval means is adapted to sequentially output digital media items retrieved using the generated and modified sets of selection.
28. A method of archiving a digital media item, the method comprising;
generating index information by:
allowing a user to identify a time,
allowing a user to identify zero or more persons from a predetermined plurality of people,
allowing a user to identify zero or more event types from a predetermined plurality of event types, and
storing the index information in association with the digital media item.

29. A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising identifying the time as a default date in response to a lack of identification from the user.
30. A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising identifying default persons as the predetermined plurality of people in response to a lack of identification from the user.
31. A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising allowing a user to select a digital media item to be archived from a library.
32. A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising allowing a user to input a digital media item.
33. A method as claimed in claims 28, further comprising allowing a user to modify the digital media item.
34. A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the method is operable only by a user from the predetermined plurality of people.
35. A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising allowing a user to identify the digital media item as belonging to an important category of digital media items.
36. A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising identifying the media type of the digital media item in the index information.
37. A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the step of storing the index information comprises storing the index information at a site remote from the user.
38. A system for archiving a digital media item, the system comprising;
means for generating index information comprising:
means for identifying a time,

means for identifying zero or more persons from a predetermined plurality of people,

means for identifying zero or more event types from a predetermined plurality of event types, and

means for storing the index information in association with the digital media item.

39. System as claimed in claim 38, further comprising means for allowing a user to select a digital media item from a library.

40. System as claimed in claim 38, further comprising means for inputting a digital media item.

41. System as claimed in claim 38, further comprising means for modifying the digital media item.

42. System as claimed in claim 38, further comprising means for allowing only users from the predetermined plurality of people to identify a time, person or people and event type or event types.

43. System as claimed in claim 38, wherein the means for storing the index information is located at a site remote from the user.

44. A terminal for use in the method as claimed in claim 28, the terminal comprising means for generating index information comprising:
 means for identifying a time,
 means for identifying zero or more persons from a predetermined plurality of people, and
 means for identifying zero or more event types from a predetermined plurality of event types.

45. A data carrier carrying computer-readable instructions for instructing a computer to carry out the method defined in any one of claims 28 to 37.
46. A signal comprising a plurality of computer-readable instructions for instructing a computer to carry out the method defined in any one of claims 28 to 37.
47. A method of retrieving a digital media item from a database, the method comprising:
- identifying a digital media item within the database;
 - automatically identifying another digital media item within the database; and
 - retrieving that another item.
48. A method as claimed in claim 47, wherein the another digital media item is identified via a previously-stored sequence association with the first mentioned digital media item.
49. A method as claimed in claim 47, wherein the another digital media item is identified at random.
50. A method as claimed in claim 47, wherein the another digital media item is identified as one having at least one common characteristic with the first mentioned digital media item.
51. A method of retrieving a digital media item as claimed in claim 47, wherein the another digital media item is identified by virtue of having at least one characteristic which is mutually exclusive with the first mentioned digital media item.
52. A method as claimed in claim 47, wherein the another data item is identified from a sub-set of digital media items which sub-set of digital media items have been previously identified as belonging to a special category within the database.

53. A method of retrieving a digital media item as claimed in claim 47, further comprising retrieval of a further digital media item.
54. A method of retrieving a digital media item as claimed in claim 53, wherein the further digital media item is retrieved in response to a user request.
55. A method of retrieving a digital media item as claimed in claim 53, wherein the further digital media item is identified automatically.
56. A method of retrieving a plurality of digital media items from a database, the method comprising identifying a first digital media item within the database, automatically identifying another digital media item within the database, retrieving that another digital media item, automatically identifying a further digital media item within the database and retrieving that further digital media item, wherein the further digital media item is identified using a different strategy from that used to identify the another digital media item.
57. A carrier medium carrying processor readable and executable code for controlling a processor to carry out the method of any one of claims 47 to 56.